



Extension Small Farms Program

107 Crop Science Building, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon 97331-3601
T 541-737-5833 | <http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu>

Representative Brad Witt, Chair
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 2700

Dear Representative Witt:

As Coordinator of the Oregon State University Extension Small Farms Program, I am writing in support of HB 2700 which would create a "Beginning and Expanding Farmer Loan Program" to assist beginning farmers with acquisition of agricultural land. I am sorry I am unable to attend the hearing on February 12 when the committee will consider this bill.

I have witnessed the impressive growth of small family farms in Oregon over the past two decades. This growth is being driven by several trends:

- A significant transfer of the nation's farmland as baby boom farmers reach retirement age. Although much of this transfer will occur in multi-generation farms, there will be a need for new farmers to fill a gap where there may not be a transfer within a family enterprise.
- A renewed interest by consumers in local agriculture that has created new and viable farm business opportunities.
- An increase in interest among young people who wish to pursue farming as a career.

The strength of these processes together creates opportunities for economic development and diversity, while at the same time ensuring a future supply of farm and forest land. It is crucial for business and government structures to be in place to support the growth in this sector.

Small family farms are just like other small family businesses. They provide unique products to the marketplace, create middle-class incomes, and diversify the economies of communities and the state. Having economic development programs that improve access to capital for farmers as we do for other businesses will enhance development and growth of established and new small family farms.

Farming is a capital intensive industry and as such, financing is a critically important factor. Anything we can do to help smaller and newer farmers obtain lower costs of capital will strengthen their operations and help build equity. I encourage you to pass HB 2700.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Stephenson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Garry Stephenson, PhD
Professor
Coordinator, Small Farms Program
Oregon State University

cc: Members of the Committee
Rep. Brad Witt, Chair
Rep. Sal Esquivel, Vice-Chair
Rep. Caddy McKeown, Vice-Chair
Rep. Brian Clem
Rep. Wayne Krieger
Rep. Jeff Reardon
Rep. Jim Thompson
Rep. Ben Unger
Rep. Gail Whitsett